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Hon Andrew Little
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24 July 2018

Dear Sir

Civil Legal Aid

1. I write to advise you of my concern over the provision of Civil Legal Aid.
2. The Law Society has reported¹ that in 2016 only 37 lawyers in Wellington took Civil Legal Aid cases (62 in 2012 -40.3% change) and only 52 lawyers in Auckland (118 in 2012 -55.9% change) and nationally 199 lawyers (433 in 2012 -54% change). A snapshot of the profession² in the same year gave the total of 12,124 NZ lawyers in practice, 13,087 in the latest snapshot³.
3. Only this week a lawyer told me she twice given up attempting to place herself on the legal aid list as the forms required were so onerous. She advised that you need a CV and a list of publications, if any. With only 37 lawyers in Wellington taking Civil Legal Aid you would expect a simplified system to encourage lawyers to achieve registration for Civil Legal Aid, not hurdles.

¹ <http://www.lawsociety.org.nz/news-and-communications/latest-news/news/falls-in-family-and-criminal-legal-aid-providers>

² https://www.lawsociety.org.nz/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/99078/NZLS-Snapshot-of-the-Profession-2016.pdf

³ https://www.lawsociety.org.nz/__data/assets/pdf_file/0020/119270/Snapshot-of-the-Profession-2018.pdf

4. I can attest from experience being one of the 37, the paperwork involved is indeed onerous not to mention the pretty poor remuneration.
5. I, and a number of other lawyers have become default triage centres for legal aid being overwhelmed by requests because we take Civil Legal Aid. I have already this year turned down over 150 cases.
6. The system is with respect a national disgrace, and should be reviewed, as its clearly not fulfilling its purpose in providing timely Civil Legal Aid to the disadvantaged.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tony Ellis', with a stylized, cursive script.

DR TONY ELLIS
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